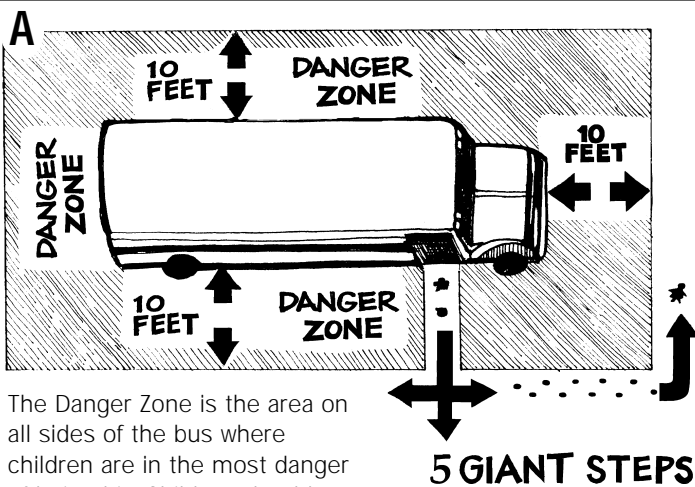


## Tip #12

# school bus stops: a risky part of the ride



The Danger Zone is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of being hit. Children should stay ten feet away from the bus (or as far away as they can) and never go behind it. They should take five giant steps in front of the bus before crossing, so they can be seen by the driver.

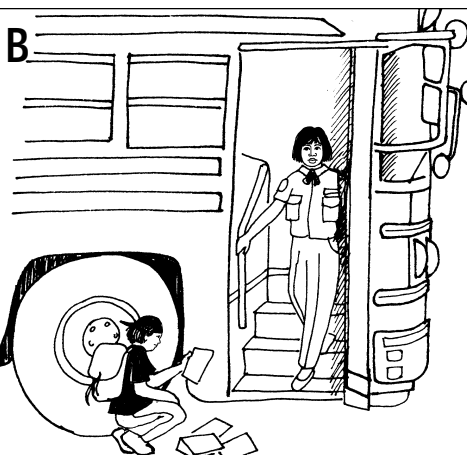
## Why students are in danger

Millions of children in the United States ride safely to and from school on school buses each day. Although school buses are the safest way to get them to school, an average of 33 school-age children die in school bus-related traffic crashes each year.

Most of those killed are pedestrians, five to seven years old. They are hit in the danger zone around the bus (A), either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself. It is illegal for a car to pass a bus with its red light flashing (see other side).

Young children are most likely to be hit because they:

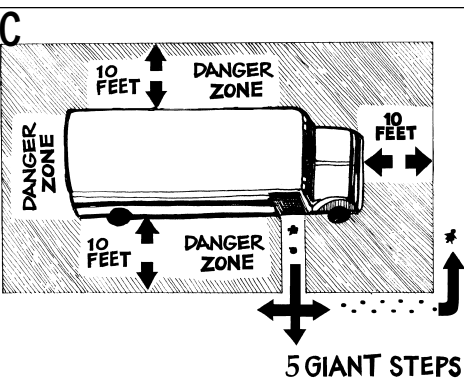
- hurry to get on or off the bus,
- act before they think and have little experience with traffic,
- assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross,
- don't always stay within the bus driver's sight.



Children should ask the driver for help if they drop something near the bus.

## Safety steps you can take

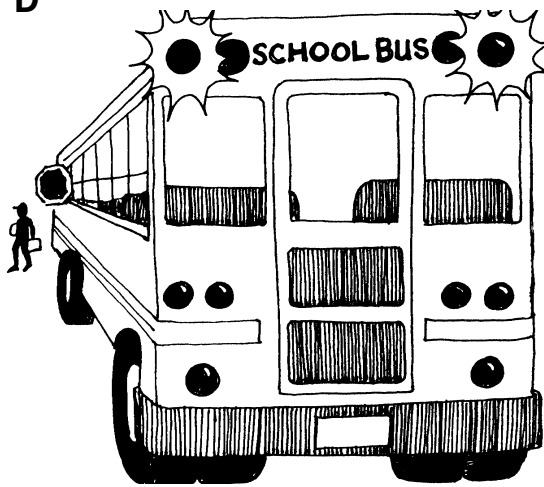
- Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road, and avoid rough play.
- Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he drops something near the bus (B). If a child stoops to pick up something, the driver cannot see him. Then he could be hit by the bus. A book bag or backpack helps keep loose items together.
- Make sure clothing has no loose drawstrings and backpack straps are short, so they don't get caught in the handrail or bus door.
- Encourage safe school bus loading and unloading (see below).
- If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your school office or transportation director about changing the location.



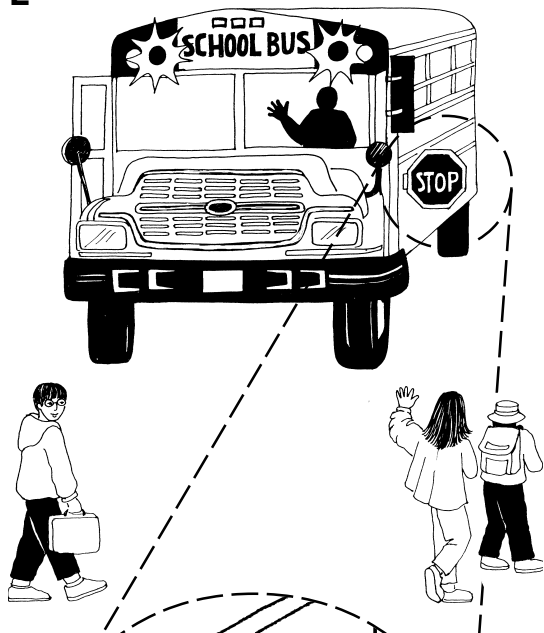
Supervise children at the school bus stop. Make sure they move away from the bus, out of the danger zone.

## Teach your child to get on and off the bus safely

1. When loading, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal. Board the bus in single file.
2. When unloading, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus (C).
3. Before crossing the street, take five "giant steps" out from the front of the bus, or until the driver's face can be seen. Wait for the driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
4. Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Continue to watch for traffic when crossing.

**D**

*If red lights are flashing, **stop!** They show that children are getting on or off the bus and may be crossing the street.*

**E**

*The extended stop signal arm alerts traffic when children get on or off the bus.*

## Risky business for motorists:

### Passing a stopped school bus

What is the most dangerous part of the school bus ride? The bus stop!

Children are at greatest risk when they are getting on or off the school bus. Most of the children killed in bus-related crashes are pedestrians, five to seven years old, who are getting on or off the bus. They are hit by the school bus or by motorists illegally passing a stopped bus.

In neighborhoods, near schools, and at bus stops, drivers need to take special care because children do not behave like adults.

Elementary school children:

- Become easily distracted and may start across the street without warning
- Don't understand the danger of moving vehicles
- Can't judge vehicle speed or distance
- May be blocked from view by the bus

**Most importantly, children expect vehicles to stop for them at the school bus stop.**

### Standard school bus stop laws

Learn and follow the school bus laws for motorists in your state. Laws exist to protect children getting on and off the bus AND to protect you from a tragedy. Check with your school transportation office or police department for more information on your state's laws. Here are standard rules:

- Motorists coming to a school bus from either direction must stop when the bus displays flashing red warning lights and extends the stop signal arm (**D** and **E**). These signals show that children are getting on or off the school bus.
- Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red lights and signals are turned off.
- Drivers traveling in the **same** direction as the bus are always required to stop.
- In some states, drivers moving in the **opposite** direction on a **divided** roadway are also required to stop. Check the law in your state.
- **Never** pass on the right side of the bus, where children enter or exit. This is illegal and can have tragic results.

**Violation of these laws can result in a citation and fine. In many places, school bus drivers can report passing vehicles!**

*For more information, call the  
NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline:  
**1-888-DASH-2-DOT**  
or visit the NHTSA website,  
[www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).*